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CONTACT:

Karen Larimore Wilkinson, PIO
Director of Public Information and Communications
City of Salisbury
217 S. Main Street
Salisbury, North Carolina 28144
Work Phone: 704-638-2113 Cell: 704-213-1050
Home Phone: 704-633-7123
Information: <http://www.salisburync.gov>
Work Email Contact: kwilk@salisburync.gov

Salisbury Transit System Offering Free Bus Rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days for Fifth Consecutive Year

Municipal Agreement with NCDOT Continues to Provide Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding in Support of Free Bus Fare for Citizens

Salisbury, NC _June 8, 2011 – The City of Salisbury’s Transit Division is offering free city bus rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days, for the fifth straight year. The initiative began May 1 and continues through September 30, 2011. The five-month period spans the NC Division of Air Quality’s specified ozone season. A municipal agreement between the City and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) provides funding via the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) project. The CMAQ project was established to support surface transportation projects and other related efforts that contribute to air quality improvements. In addition, the grant strives to improve customer relations and to promote local transit systems as an alternative form of transportation.

Mayor Susan Kluttz, speaking on behalf of the Salisbury City Council said, “Public transportation is a vital element in our nation’s efforts to speak to economic, environmental, and energy-related challenges. Public transportation offers an affordable and convenient alternative to driving. By utilizing our public transit system, citizens are able to take advantage of all aspects of our local environment. Our transit system allows riders to travel to work, conduct business, reach medical facilities, and participate in community events.” Kluttz notes that the environmental impact of choosing public transit is significant. “Ground-level ozone and smog can emerge when cars and household products generate hazardous emissions. In comparison to private vehicles, public transportation generates 95% less carbon monoxide. The free bus fare program offers a wonderful opportunity for citizens to help improve air quality, lessen greenhouse gas emissions, and support our nation’s efforts to become less reliant on foreign oil.”

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) website, located at www.apta.com, offers that during 2010, Americans took 10.2 billion trips on public transportation. In addition, APTA boasts that from 1995 through 2010, public transportation ridership increased by 31%. This increase is higher than the 17% increase in U.S. population and the 24% growth in the use of our nation’s highways, during the same period. Mayor Kluttz adds, “As citizens seek ways to reduce spending, our public transportation system offers a practical means of conserving finances while offering a positive investment in our planet.”

City of Salisbury Transit Division Manager Rodney Harrison said, "We are truly thankful to receive CMAQ funding support again this year. The City of Salisbury and the Salisbury Transit Division are proud to serve as good stewards of our environment and to do our part to assist in improving local air quality. The free ride program provides opportunity to highlight the tremendous value that our bus service offers to the community. This program also allows first-time riders to experience our transit system at no expense. For every \$1 billion invested in public transportation, 30,000 jobs across our nation are supported." The Salisbury Transit system prides itself on customer service and travels to numerous major shopping destinations throughout the city including the Salisbury Mall, Wal-Mart, Innes Street Market, Magic Mart, K-Mart, and the Ketner Center. In addition, the bus system travels to Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Livingstone College, and within blocks of Catawba College. The Employment Security Commission, Post Office, Health Department, Rowan Regional Medical Center, V.A. Hospital and the Department of Social Services, are included within the Transit system's normal daily route. Frequent bus stops throughout Downtown Salisbury offer a one-block walking distance from the City Square. In addition, City bus routes include destinations in Spencer and East Spencer.

The current rate for local bus riders is \$1.00 for regular fares. Senior citizens (age 60 and over) and handicapped riders may ride for 50 cents per person. Transfers are free, as well as bus fare for children under the age of five. Riders may board and disembark from any designated bus stop throughout the City or at the Salisbury Transfer site on Depot Street, located adjacent to the Amtrak Train Station. City buses arrive and depart daily from the transfer site at 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the hour. Bus service is available Monday through Friday from 6:15 am to 6:45 pm and on Saturday from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm. City buses are non-operational on Sunday.

By 5 pm each day, the Salisbury Transit Division receives the local air quality and ozone level report forecast for the next day. If the local forecast predicts an orange or red ozone action day, the free ride program will be initiated. Probable riders may contact the Transit Hotline at 704-216-7537 after 7 pm each day, to receive an updated ozone status report. In addition, citizens may visit the City of Salisbury's Transit Division webpage at www.salisburync.gov/transit for more information.

Harrison explains that ozone is the main factor in urban smog and can be harmful to one's health. Even at low levels, ozone can generate a number of respiratory effects, particularly in vulnerable individuals such as young children, the elderly, or persons with asthma and breathing difficulties. Ground level ozone concentrations are more apt to exceed safe health levels on extremely hot days with slight or no wind and with temperatures in the 90 degrees and above range. Harrison offers that the majority of high ozone concentrations usually occur between 10 am and 8 pm and that sluggish air masses, occurring in late summer months, can lock-in, and hold ozone near the surface. "Citizens may visit any of our Salisbury Parks & Recreation Centers for detailed maps outlining transit destinations and arrival and departure times. We encourage our citizens to take advantage of the free bus fare program and leave the driving to us. The goal of our drivers is to make your travel experience both pleasant and prompt."

For more information regarding the free bus fare initiative, please contact Harrison via the Transit Office at 704-638-5253. The City of Salisbury is an equal opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit

us on the web at www.salisburync.gov. To receive updates regarding local initiatives, meetings, programs, and events, please join the City of Salisbury's Facebook users group at www.salisburync.gov/facebook or follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/CitySalisburyNC>.

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